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## A Pioneer Wedding

Letter<sup>1</sup> from Catherine M. Noble Davidson<sup>2</sup> to Margaret A. Sullivan.<sup>3</sup>

Indianapolis May (June) 6th, '40.

My Dearest Friend

I perused your letter with a mixture of pleasure and pain. I was delighted to hear from the dearest girl to me on earth and was pained when I found that you were wounded at my sending an notice of my marriage with the *respects* of Mrs. A. H. Davidson, and that you imagined that as I was forming new *interests* that I had not still a place in my heart for you. I will tell you about the paper. I requested Mr. Davidson<sup>4</sup> to get me a Journal containing a notice of our marriage, to send to you. he got it and wrote on it and addressed it to you with his own hand. he said with respects of Mrs. A. H. D. as much as fun, of seeing it written as for anything, else, and I know, he did not once think that *respects* would sound *cold* and *formal* and as I was dressing for *making* rather *returning* calls I did not write myself. Mag, *forget* this and feel assured that there is not another girl on the earth, for whom I entertain pure, disinterested, unmingled affection except yourself you Mag. Since you (I) have (been) away from you I have learned how (to) appreciate your excellent and amiable qualities. I am not flattering Not (a) day passes away that I do not remember you and am not reminded of some act or expression of kindness towards me. Mag I have to dwell on your character, *energy* is your prominent characteristic. In yourself are united two qualities which are irresistible, the most acute sensitiveness, to joy or grief in your own person, and the most lively sympathy with the

<sup>1</sup> This letter was presented to the Indiana State Library by a granddaughter of Catherine Noble Davidson, Miss Valette Miller of Indianapolis. With her assistance and that of others who are related to the old families of Indianapolis, the identity of most of the persons mentioned in the letter has been ascertained. The wedding, described in the letter, took place in the old Noble home-stead, which stood on Market street, near what is now Cruse street, Indianapolis.

ESTHER U. McNITT, Indiana State Library.

<sup>2</sup> Daughter of Governor Noah Noble.

<sup>3</sup> Daughter of Judge Jeremiah Sullivan.

<sup>4</sup> Alexander H. Davidson, 1812-63, quartermaster-general of Indiana, 1839-44.

feelings of *others*. Mag excuse me but I can (not) refrain from pouring out the sentiment of my heart and soul in regard to yourself. I will now tell you about my wedding how I was attired for *the occasion*. On the 19th about 7-o'clock we were united hand and *heart* in the presence of nearly 200, hundred persons. I can not say in their *presence* for they had to stand in the front hall, and in the yard, and of course there were many that did not witness the ceremony. The candles were not lighted until afterwards. My dress was of White Satin very rich and thick dead white. The bosom made with folds across, with one row of shell trimming around the neck, two rows on the sleeves. The skirt *long without any trimming* deep blonde on the sleeves. My gloves white kid satin on the tops and edged with blonde. My hair was plaited behind and my Grecian curls were curled very beautifully and worn behind curls in front. Mock orange blossoms were sent to me to wear in my hair. I wore them in front buried in my curls and beautiful white rose in behind. My shoes were of *light kid* the(y) were *entirely white* at candle light. My pocket-kерchief was trimmed with deep lace. Mrs Williams came in *the* room we were in before the gentlemen came and she offered me her *chain* and *watch* which I wore and completed my dress. E. Browning's<sup>5</sup> dress was of some thin kind of goods of I do not know the name with a broad satin stripe and a vine in it and something between the stripes. It was very beautifull, looked like a blonde dress. M. Yandis<sup>6</sup> dress was trimmed with satin on the skirts and on the bosoms likewise Jane Rings. They all looked well. pretty E. B. & Dr Bobbs<sup>7</sup> went in first. (I mistake) O Neal<sup>8</sup> & J. R. went in first, and stepped to the right of the place in the front parlour, Jane retaining O N's arm, and then E. B. & Dr B. went in next, and stood to the left near the folding doors, she still leaning on Dr B.'s arm. M. Y. and Hubbard<sup>9</sup> went in and parted to make room for Mr

<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth L. Browning, daughter of Edmund Browning. She later married Samuel V. B. Noel. Nowland, J. H. B., *Reminiscences of Indianapolis* (Indianapolis, 1870), p. 192.

<sup>6</sup> Mary Yandes, daughter of Daniel Yandes of Indianapolis.

<sup>7</sup> Dr. John S. Bobbs, 1809-70, a prominent surgeon of Indianapolis.

<sup>8</sup> Probably Hugh O'Neal, who came to Indianapolis in 1821. Nowland, p. 112.

<sup>9</sup> Probably William S. Hubbard, 1816-1907. He came to Indianapolis in 1837. Nowland, p. 331.

*Davidson* and *Catherine* who followed and stood between M. Y. and Hubbard Catherine still having D.'s arm, immediately in the front of the fire place. Imagine us thus arranged Mr Beecher<sup>10</sup> in front of the semicircle, and a dozen upon the sofa chairs and pressing near to get a glimpse. I was calm, composed as one could be on any occasion. I felt Mr. Davidson's heart beat next to my arm. Now the prayer begins which is quite long *beautiful appropriate* (mutilated) it made (me) thrill, with emotions pleasure of the most peculiar character. Beecher knew all the circumstances of the former engagement, and he made a very delicate allusion to it. The ceremony was short. Mr Beecher kissed us both and said it was *done now* he was sick and was carried into a room to lie down. friends relations pressed forward to offer their congratulations. My attendants were the first to kiss me. When the door was thrown open for us to enter the parlour there was Duncan standing immediately in the view. Mag I ought perhaps not to mention Duncan's name but there are subjects I dare not touch *upon on paper at least*. wait till I see you. but I *digress* too often from the subject. Our supper was between eight and *nine* The bed was taken out of mother's room the tables were set one opposite the fire place and the(n) down the sides from the one, opposite the fireplace in the centre of the room between the tables was a small mahogany *candle stand*,<sup>11</sup> *round top* covered with a white cloth, bearing the Brides cake which was very splendid. a large pyramid was at the head of the table. We had elegant jelly cake and other kinds in fruit baskets and cut up in slices set in plates, *tea coffee* ice creams were sent around in the parlour afterward I have not told you how Mr D. was dressed. It was a rich suit of Broad cloth black satin vest, stock, *frock* coat, boots very handsome made for the express purpose, a pocket handkerchief that I gave him. his appearance was very fine looked extremely handsome very animated. his attendants were dressed in the same style. Well Mag I am as happy as mortal man can make me! I feel as if I had indeed, entered into a new state of being and that

<sup>10</sup> Henry Ward Beecher, pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church of Indianapolis, 1839-47. Dunn, J. P., *Greater Indianapolis* (Chic., 1910), I, p. 582.

<sup>11</sup> This table is now in the possession of Miss Valette Miller.

I had my part to perform in great theater of human life, as if a good deal was expected from me, and that I know, must begin to take my own stand in society and must depend upon myself. I wish you were in the same new existence and near me to begin the world with me. Mag, marry some person and come and live in Indianapolis. When you are engaged wont you let me know? I am invited to dine at Mr Beecher's today, and I am looking for Mr D. to come and go with me. We are going to a party tonight at James Morrison's<sup>12</sup> Alex Morrison<sup>13</sup> has given one which we attended. There will be more parties given, which would have been given were it not for so many being gone to the Battle Ground.<sup>14</sup> What glorious occasion the greatest political gathering ever known in our country. You have heard of the number estimated to have been present from 40,000 to 60,000. In the evening there was a most brilliant Borealis which was hailed with a shout as an omen of success to the whigs. There was great excitement on Monday as the different delegations passed through with their banners and flags, log cabins towards the Battle Ground. a great many persons went from this place, but no ladies. There has been incessant rains, which have prevented the ladies from this place from attending 600 Ladies from other parts were there. The day was fine for convention. Tom<sup>15</sup> called up to see me the evening he arrived. I was much pleased to see him. Isabella Wick<sup>16</sup> has returned and is, preparing to go to housekeeping, and will be ready this coming week. I called to see her. I thought she looked very thin. We had a great number of calls on the next day after our marriage, and someone has been out ever day since. last evening we had twelve calls, in the *afternoon* rather.

<sup>12</sup> Judge James Morrison, 1796-1869. He was secretary of state, 1829-33, and was the first attorney-general of Indiana. *Nowland*, p. 214.

<sup>13</sup> Major Alexander F. Morrison, 1804-57. He was the first publisher of the *Indiana Democrat*. *Nowland*, p. 218.

<sup>14</sup> A state convention was held May 29 by the Young Men Whigs at the Tippecanoe battle-ground, because of its historical connection with their candidate, William Henry Harrison. This Battle-Ground Convention was attended by many from other states and was full of the old-fashioned campaign enthusiasm. *Spirit of '76*, Indianapolis, June 6, 1840.

<sup>15</sup> Probably Thomas L. Sullivan, son of Judge Jeremiah Sullivan.

<sup>16</sup> Isabella Barbee Wick, whom Judge William W. Wick married in 1839. Woollen, W. W., *Biographical and Historical Sketches of Early Indiana*. Indianapolis, 1883, p. 260.

Parry has returned from the Baltimore Convention.<sup>17</sup> did not (know) anything of Mr. D. and I, untill he got to Cincinnati and then he heard that I was married he was shocked and *could* not come to see me untill yesterday he did not call my name had very little to say, trembled like an aspen, voice faltered. I am delighted with those articles you presented me. The music is pretty very, been very much admired.

I must bring this to a close. Will trouble your self to read it? I have (not) looked (at) a word as I have written if you can read I will be glad. do write soon and I will (be) glad to hear from you often as you will write (mutilated) I will take just the same interest in you and your (mutilated) formerly. My feelings have not changed in regard to anything (illegible) young person's love. Don't mention when you write, either Duncan's or Parry's name. I will (not) show your letters to Mr D if you do not wish it I will (not) let him know anything that you might want to say to me alone.

Adeu dearest friend, Mag, I remain

still your friend Catherine M. N. Davidson

Mrs McClure left us evening before last for Madison on her way to Virginia she will visit Mrs. H.'s some time.\*

Miss M. A. Sullivan,

Madison (Indiana)

<sup>17</sup> A national convention of the Whig Young Men was held at Baltimore May 4. *Spirit of '76*, May 16, 1840.

\*This letter was published in the March number of this magazine, while the editor was away. The printer and proofreader objected to the spelling and grammar and rewrote it as they thought it should be. ED.